

# Resource Family Connection

News, Events and Information Benefiting the Children of Waukesha County November 2015



# What I Wish Others Knew About Foster Parent Grief By: Dr. John DeGarmo

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of being a foster parent is the moment when our child from foster care leaves our homes. As a foster parent, our home becomes a place where children placed in the foster care system come for a period of time, with the goal of being reunited with their family in the near future. Reunification is not possible for some foster children, and the birth parents' rights are terminated. As a result,

these children become available for adoption, and some foster parents do indeed end up making their foster child a permanent addition to their family through adoption. I have been blessed to adopt three children from foster care, myself. If reunification is not possible with the birth parents, many foster children instead are placed into a birth family member's home. Whatever the reason might be, reunification can be a difficult time for foster parents, as the child they have come to love leaves their home. Indeed, for many foster parents, contact with a former foster child after reunification is a time of deep sadness and grief, as there is no closure for the foster parents. Sadly, I have also faced two failed adoptions, as well, leaving my family devastated.

Quite simply, we grieve the loss of a child.

Each foster child is different, and each placement into a home creates different sets of emotions. As a foster parent, there may be those children we may not have strong attachments to, due to emotional or behavioral issues, yet an attachment with these children is still made, nonetheless. Some foster children will be so difficult, that they may even have to be removed for the safety of all. Still, other foster children will steal our hearts, and will become a dear and cherished member of our families, leaving you heartbroken. When any foster child leaves our homes, no matter the level of attachment, there will be emotions when it is time to say goodbye, for both ourselves and the child. Rest assured, many foster parents do feel grief during the removal of their foster child, as the child has come to be an important and loved member of their family. After all, the removal of a foster child from a foster home is akin to a loss, and any loss can cause grieving.

There are times when the removal of a foster child from may come

or even a few hours, before our child from foster care is to move. This may be due to a court order, health reasons, or placement into another foster home. Other times, plenty of notice is given to the foster parents beforehand. Whenever we are told, there will sure to be emotions involved, for both our families and the foster child.

> Grief can be expressed in variety of ways, depending upon the individual, as it is personal. Some will shed tears and cry while others will hold it inside. Some will busy themselves in a task, while other will seem detached and far away. Some will blame the system, while others will suffer from depression. The departure of our child from foster care from our home can be one that is devastating our family. These same feelings may be felt by our foster child when he is removed from his own home, and first placed in ours.

I have watched over 45 children come to live with me and my family, and then move to other homes. Each time, my wife and I have grown to love these children, caring for them as if they were our very own, and treating them the same as all the others in our home; biological, adoptive, or foster. Each time a child

leaves, my wife and I experience a great sense of loss, even when we can be comforted with the knowledge that the children have gone to a good and safe home. There have been times when my wife has sunk into deep grief, crying for days. We have both spent considerable time on our knees, lifting up a former foster child up in prayer.

To be sure, it is hard being a foster parent. The grief when a child leaves can, at times, be over whelming and consuming. It is like losing a child, a member of our family. Yet, I don't want to give up when a child leaves, because my heart is heavy. There are other children out there, right now, who need a home and need a family. There is a child out there right now who needs us to love him. There is a child out there right now who needs YOU to love him.

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# **CANS CORNER**

Eve Altizer & Rebecca Hollister
Child and Family Division
Supervisors

Hello Caregivers! As we come down from the sugar high of Halloween and start getting prepared for the holiday season, it's important to take care of yourself! Let's be real - as caregivers we take care of everyone – it's what we do! We don't ask for help because we don't want to be too needy, or feel like others will believe that we can't do it all! Self-care, however, is crucial for all of us to be at our best in order to successfully care for others. As a part of the CANS assessment, there is a section regarding caregivers. Social workers are asked to have a conversation with you about how you are doing in relation to meeting not only your needs, but the child(ren) you are caring for. You may be asked questions such as "Do you feel comfortable with what you know about your child's needs?", "How to you feel about being involved in services for your child?", and "Do you feel comfortable speaking up on behalf of your child?" We ask these questions not only to assess how things are going between you and the child, but also to listen to how you are doing and determine if there are any other supports that you may need as a caregiver. Using the CANS as a tool for communication helps to identify your needs and organizes information about the child. This communication builds more effective services for you, the child and family! This fall we are grateful for communication and change. "Just like the seasons, people have the ability to change."

## 2015 Holiday Stroll in Waukesha

The Holiday Stroll will be held on Sunday, November 22nd from Noon - 4:00 p.m. throughout downtown Waukesha

Stroll the downtown area and enjoy the shops' decorations before the Christmas Parade. The Shops downtown roll out the Red Carpet treatment with store specials and open houses.

Get into the Holiday Spirit as carolers stroll and music fills the streets in downtown, along with the costume characters.

Get free photos with Santa from Noon - 3:00 p.m. at Fruits of the Spirit Candles located at 349 W. Broadway St.

Author Mania at Martha Merrell's Books with Local authors on hand to sell personalized copies of their books as Christmas Presents. Last year, we had over 25 authors.

Reserve your seats for the Christmas Parade.

### 2015 Waukesha Christmas Parade

The 53rd annual Waukesha Christmas Parade will be held on Sunday, November 22, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. Parade entries this year are asked to incorporate the theme, "The Isle of Misfit Toys," into their floats or costumes.

Kids, bring your letters to Santa and give them to the mail carriers at the start of the Parade or to Santa's Elves at the end. Be sure to include your name and address to receive a return note from Santa.

Come early and enjoy the downtown festivities of the Holiday Stroll from Noon - 4:00 p.m.

The parade begins at approximately East and Main Streets and heads southwest down Main to West, then east on Wisconsin to the ending at Wisconsin and Maple.

# **FAMILY HIGHLIGHT**

## The Winkler Family

Waukesha County is extremely fortunate to have incredibly dedicated foster parents. This month's highlight is on Ed & Bette Winkler who have maintained their devotion to children as foster parents for the past 11 years. Over the years, they have fostered approximately 23 children, including those who have lived in their home and others for whom they provide respite care. They have cared for children of various ages, but now focus primarily on teens. Bette says they are energized by seeing how teens mature and change.

Children have always been an essential part of Ed and Bette's lives, having raised their own six kids. While growing up, Bette helped care for her two younger siblings. She has been an educator for the past 30 years and teaches classes at WCTC in Early Childhood, Allied Health and High School Completion. When all but their 16-year-old son had left home, they felt the house seemed empty. This prompted them to embark on a new journey of becoming foster parents. Ed was more hesitant at first but his enthusiasm for his new role increased after he attended Foundation Training. Their first placement with two brothers posed challenges for their son and for the family. However, they worked through this and ultimately feel that the fostering experience helped their son grow by learning the realities of children who have faced difficult life circumstances.

In addition to the rewards of watching children in their care grow and develop, Bette also derives deep satisfaction from witnessing the personal achievements of biological parents resulting in being reunited with their children. Through her strength in Shared Parenting, Bette has encouraged and supported many parents, including a mother who obtained her GED with her guidance.

Ed and Bette have shown flexibility and expertise in accepting a variety of children, including those who are struggling with behavioral issues. Even when caring for her elderly mother, Bette always gave serious consideration to placement requests. Her desire to learn as much as possible about issues related to foster care is evident in the many times she took the extra effort to attend trainings, even when she had to bring her wheelchair-bound mother along with her.

Ed and Bette have noted that they are greatly inspired by the wonderful foster parents they have had the pleasure of meeting throughout the years. I share this sentiment and view Ed and Bette as a tremendous source of personal inspiration for their ongoing devotion and passion for doing this difficult and meaningful work.

### Random Acts of Kindness

Kevin Tolzman, social worker in the Adolescent and Family Unit, is working with a family in which the guardians are caring for a teen named Roy. They have instilled the value of sharing with those less fortunate through encouraging Roy to donate the clothes he no longer wears to other children who are in foster care. The Foster Care Clothing Closet is always in need of clothing for teens, and Roy has donated many items, including a winter coat! We thank Roy and his family for their generosity in reaching out to others.



# What the Media Doesn't Tell You About Foster Parents Like Me

Perhaps you read in the news recently about the foster parent who abused their foster child. You might have even read in the news about the infant who died in foster care, under the supervision of the little child's foster parents.

Tragic and heart-wrenching!

It should come as no surprise that our media is focusing on these stories. Of course they are. The media likes to shine the light on those stories that garner attention; those stories that disturb; those stories that readers are interested in. You know, those stories that are often focused on the horrible and the shocking. You might think that all foster parents are bad people. You might think that all foster parents are in it for the money. You might think that all foster parents don't care about the children in their homes.

I am not that kind of foster parent.

When a child from foster care comes into my family, and into my home, they become a part of my family, they become an important part of my home. In my house, there is no difference between one of my biological, adoptive and foster children. In truth, there are no labels. They are indeed all my children. Each child is loved with as much love and compassion as I can possibly give. I am like that mamma bear who fights for her cubs. I fight for my foster children with all that I have. It doesn't always make me popular with the case workers. It doesn't always make me popular with the birth parents, or the court systems. Yet, that is no matter. These are my children, and I will fight with all I have to protect them and keep them safe. I will do all I can to make sure they are safe, they have all they need, and that they are loved.

For a foster child who may have been abused, beaten, or neglected, this type of love is most important. Without this type of love, a foster child will not form necessary and healthy attachment with others, resulting in a number of attachment disorders. Emotional difficulties such as a of lack of self worth, trust, and the need to be in control often result in the lack of unconditional and healthy parental love. As anyone who has worked with foster children will tell you, most foster children face an enormous amount of emotional issues, many times stemming from the lack of healthy love.

To be sure, the vast majority of foster parents I meet are the same way. As I travel across the United States, working with foster parents, I hear stories that are similar to my own. We care for these children because we DO care. Is it easy? Many times, it is not. Do we see signs of reward? Often times, we do not. Do others place false assumptions and judgments upon us foster parents? Daily --from friends, family members and strangers. I have found that the general society does not really understand or appreciate what foster care is about. They do not realize what foster children go through each day, nor for that matter what foster parents go through, either. Even my own friends and family members do not fully understand what my wife and I experience each day as a foster parent, or really why we do it.

I even have family members who question why my wife and I continue to take children who are in need into our hears and home, after all these years, and after all the sleepless nights and stress-filled days.

Yet, these children need someone to protect them and shield them from harm. These children need someone to care for them, and provide stability. These children need someone to love them. These children need me. I am that foster parent. I will answer that call, and I am not alone in this.

# **Clothing Closet Corner**



The Foster Care Clothing Closet is a resource established to help meet the clothing needs of children placed in foster care and is available to all resource families. If you have a child placed in your home, please contact your social worker to make arrangements to visit the clothing closet.

We have had a steady stream of donations coming in particularly for younger children and are running out of room. We are currently looking for donations of clothing for older children/teens. If you have a donation you would like to make for this population, please contact Susan Peck at 262-896-8574.

# 7 Tips For Self Care

An important part of fostering is taking care of yourself, so we put together this article especially for you!

### • Take a bubble bath.

After the kids are in bed, spend 15 minutes soaking in a warm bubble bath.

#### Go For A Walk

Whether you take a walk over your lunch hour at work or sneak one in between your appointments, nature is good for the soul.

### Read A Book

Take a break from reality and lose yourself in a good book.

### Practice a hobby

Whether it is knitting, sewing, drawing or painting...do something fun & creative for you!

### Gardening

You are never too old to play in the dirt

#### Aromatherapy

Pick up some uplifting scents from your local health food store.

#### Laugh

Rent a funny movie and laugh out loud.

Thank you for everything that you do and remember to take some time for you!



# **Training and Events**



# **Training Offered By Waukesha** County

### Parent Café

Parent Café's are an educational opportunity for parents to come together and deal with the stressors, worries and challenges of parenting in a supportive environment.

December 1, 2015 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM Center for Excellence N4W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha To register for childcare, RSVP or for guestions call, 262-521-0317.

# **Relative Caregivers Support/Education**

November 17, 2015 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM **Parents Place** 

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

Free childcare available. Please call Parents Place to reserve your spot at 262-549-5575.

Waukesha County Relative Resource Families Please RSVP to Janis (262-548-7267) or Libby (262-548-7277)

# **Foster Parent Support Group**

First Wednesday of each month November 4, 2015 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM **Parents Place** 

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI 262-549-5575

On-sight daycare is available, but you must register in advance to secure a slot as there may be a cut-off depending on the number of children.

### **Support Group For Dads**

This is a new group to enhance group members' experience as fathers. Topics of discussion will include coping with stress; developing a better relationship with partner/spouse/child's mother; identifying positive role models in your life; identifying how you are a positive role model for your child(ren); discussing your role as a father and what you would like to change or improve.

Fourth Tuesday of each month November 24, 2015 6:00PM - 7:30PM **Parents Place** 1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI

# **Waukesha County Foster Parent** Orientation

Waukesha Department of Health and Human Services invites you to attend a foster parent orientation meeting. These meetings are open to anyone who is interested in learning about our foster care program. If you are currently in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent, you are required to attend an orientation session prior to approval of your foster care license.

We encourage you to complete the online foster parent pre-placement training prior to attending this information session. The training can be found online at http://wcwpds.wisc.edu/foster-parenttraining/. Please save the certificates after you have completed each module. These are required to become licensed.

November 10, 2015; and December 8, 2015 All orientation sessions occur from 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Where: Human Services Center, 514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI 53188

To register for an orientation session, contact your foster care coordinator.

# **Training**

**Parents Place Programs** 262-549-5575 www.ppacinc.org

- Love and Logic ® Mondays, November 2 - 23; 5:30 - 7:30 PM
- **Strengthening Families** (Parent and Child Class) Tuesdays, November 3 - 24; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- Having Fun With Your Kids in the Kitchen (Parent and Child Class) Thursday, November 5; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- Adult Anger Mondays, November 9 - 23; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Creating a Culture of Respect** Thursdays, November 12 & 19 and December 3 & 10; 5:30 - 7:00 PM
- **Kids Managing Anger** (Parent and Child Class) Mondays, November 30 - December 21; 5:30 -7:00 PM

### **Coalition for Children** www.coalitionforcyf.org

For other training opportunities, see the Coalition for Children. Youth & Families website: www.coalitionforcyf.org. They offer interactive webinars that count toward the required face to face training hours.

#### Contact Numbers:

Waukesha County Health & Human Services 262-548-7212

Eve Altizer, Supervisor 262-548-7272

Rebecca Hollister, Supervisor 262-548-7271

Vickie Smith, Supervisor 262-970-4761

Janis Ramos, Foster Care Coord. 262-548-7267

Susan Peck, Foster Care Coord. 262-896-8574

Libby Sinclair, Relative Licensing 262-548-7277

# Social Workers:

Tracy Clark 262-548-7270
Megan Fishler 262-896-8570
Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359
Jamie Kasten 262-548-7265
Becca Kuester 262-896-6857
Jessica Larsen 262-548-7346
Melissa Lipovsek 262-548-7348
Maria Maurer 262-548-7345
Chelsey Nisbet 262-896-6896
Rachel O'Sullivan 262-548-7639
Stacy Pawlak 262-548-7262
Eugenio
Quantro-Plaga 262-548-7684
Michael Reed 262-548-7347
Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349
Kim Sampson 262-548-7273
Linda Senger 262-548-7698

# Kinship Workers:

Linda Finn	262-548-7254
Jessica Morris	262-548-7256

Children's Mental Health Outreach

Medical Emergency: 911 Family Emergency: 211

### Foster Parent Mentor

David Mersfelder.... 262-542-2926

### September 2015 Placements

Waukesha County Licensed Homes Relative/Kinship/Level 1 Placements: 48 Children

Juvenile Corrections: Residential Care Facilities: Relative/Kinship Level 1 Foster Homes: Level 2 Foster Homes:

Waukesha County Children in Out of Home Placement

55 Children

Group Homes: 11 Children Shelter Care

1 Child

80 Children Inpatient Hospital: Total Children in OHC: 100 Children

If an Allegation of Abuse or Neglect has been made against you, please call:

### FASPP

Norma Schoenberg 920-922-9627

Level 2 Placements: 36 Children

262-549-5575